



# Statements and Speeches

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## A CHALLENGE OF HISTORIC PROPORTIONS

Opening Statement to the Ministerial Meeting of the Conference on International Economic Co-operation by the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, President of the Privy Council of Canada and Co-Chairman of the Conference, Paris, May 30, 1977.

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In the closing days of 1975, I suggested to the first ministerial session of this Conference on International Economic Co-operation (CIEC) that we faced a challenge of historic proportions; in the next three days we must finalize our present response to that challenge. I remain confident that we can meet it, recognizing the conference is a step in a longer journey along a necessary path that must eventually take us all towards a new global order.

The CIEC, with its membership drawn from 27 industrialized and developing nations, is a unique conference in its structure and approach. It deals with a world faced by a need for fundamental and permanent adjustment — a world in which developing countries face intensified problems and yet are gaining a new awareness of their potential. It has an almost universal focus in terms of the issues before it, yet its deliberations have been careful, comprehensive and innovative. These fundamental and complex questions deserve the long hours of discussion they have received over the past months. An immediate gain is our greatly-advanced comprehension of and sensibility to them. Many of these questions have no simple answer; for some, even at the close of our present discussions, we shall have only completed a leg of a major but essential voyage, since their ultimate implementation and resolution must rest elsewhere.

We have already made real progress in some areas, such as long-term growth of the IBRD (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) capital, commitments to substantial increases in ODA (official development assistance), the necessity to reduce dependence on hydrocarbons, and we have endorsed a decade on African infrastructure.

In our continuing deliberations, we must strive to focus our attention on the feasible and the most important amongst the proposals presented to us by the senior officials' meeting. These are areas where concrete advances can result if we resolve certain essential principles and policies. It would be too easy to fail to focus on the issues most needing our attention when almost every issue on the table has global and major national implications; it is a cruel dilemma faced by this conference throughout its life but one I hope we can discipline ourselves to accept.

Success will not come easily for us. The extent to which we succeed will depend upon the new commitments we can all make in the next three days. This conference and the

broader events of the last three years have made us all very aware of both the realities of the fundamental challenge facing mankind in a resource-finite world and the inherent, painful complexities of change. As political leaders we have all recognized that new decisions and policies are inevitably the product of a complex and permanent two-way traffic. We shall not make the progress we must make if we, developed and developing countries alike, bind ourselves absolutely to the briefs I see before most of us around the table. The challenge before us is to evolve beyond these set positions. However, we equally cannot reorder the world in three days.

A failure to meet the challenge and find the appropriate middle ground would, to my mind, represent a major failure for all countries, developed and developing, to promote an orderly evolution in the area of international economic relations. This evolution is now a necessary, permanent dynamic for us all, which we should face squarely. Inaction brings escalating penalties. There is no doubt in my mind that we must pursue, and indeed promote, this dynamic, not only in this conference but in many other international forums, especially those within the UN system, and with the full and equitable involvement of all segments of our populations.

This conference's immediate genesis is in the world-wide economic and even social difficulties of the past years, from which we have yet to fully emerge. These events have made us all even more conscious of the growing interdependence of nations. We are not, I hope, sharply delineated "North and South", but rather neighbours on one planet, and as such jointly responsible for mankind's future well-being. We are gaining new perceptions on how we should and can interact, on how to find a new equilibrium between nations and individuals, on how to meet the challenge of sharing. What we should add over the next three days, as we bring this Conference on International Economic Co-operation to a successful close, is a further commitment of concern. Commitments at a global level that we already accept nationally must not rest on an economic power relationship alone; increasingly they must find their rationale in certain moral imperatives, in social justice. Our task is to record our permanent commitment to these objectives and a sustained dialogue to seek continuing advances in these areas.

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